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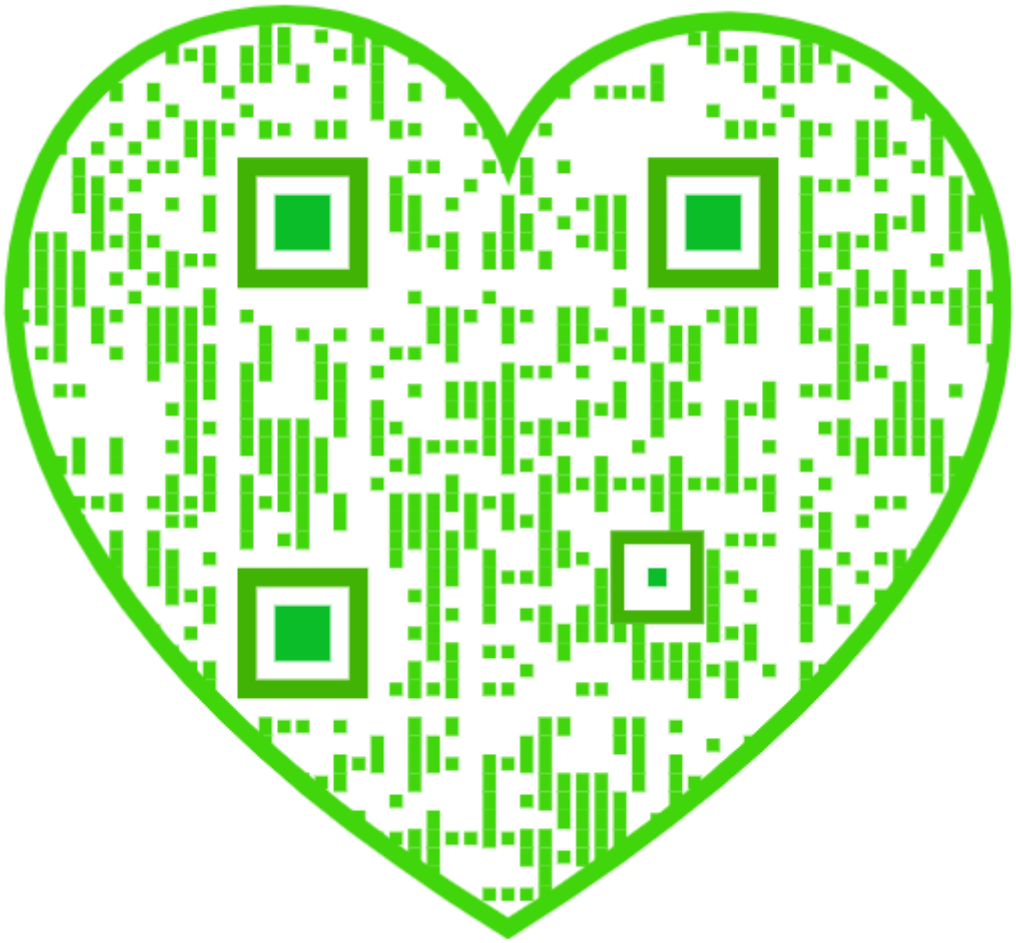

Christmas Stories

"Where water lilies bloom in secluded nook

Christmas Stories

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1913
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To My Sister

The Berkshire Hills
John Grimshaw
The Christmas Bride

PREFACE

Having been for many years occupied in the production of books in a mechanical way, may perhaps afford some excuse for desiring to see the creations of my own mind in print. The writing these thoughts in rhyme is asked to be excused as they seemed easier to record in this way. The author has no desire that it should be understood, nor does he pretend that it is poetry.

They are just simple little stories that have come into his mind and have afforded him many pleasurable hours in their production, and he will feel himself more than repaid if what he has written affords but a small percentage of the pleasure that he himself enjoyed thinking and writing the thoughts.

That he has tried to convey in these little stories the spirit of Christmas will be seen, and there may possibly be lessons that would profit for other seasons. Humanity and human ways are the same the world over, and all are touched with the joys and sorrows of others.

THE AUTHOR.

The Berkshire Hills

The Berkshire Hills

IN a little nook amidst the Berkshire hills,
Near purling streams and amongst the brooks and rills,
Whose music lends a charm to all the lovely scene,
Naught else is heard—silence—it reigns supreme.
That is, the tumult of man, and all his works,
For here 'tis not heard, no sound of labor lurks
'Midst this solitude that doth impress the mind;
We expect almost our Maker here to find.
Listen! 'Tis not silence—music is all around,
In air, on earth, everywhere it doth abound.
The lark in the sky on earth doth cast his gaze,
And with most joyous song poor humanity amaze.
We look, we see the tiny speck, gaze beyond,
Behold the vaults of heaven and they respond
To the ecstasy that fills our wakened mind,
In pondering its wonders new joys we find.
There is silence no more to our din-dumbed ears,
But a thousand sweet notes to our mind appears,
That we had not thought of—neither dreamed about,
And we are almost tempted with joy to shout.
A new world its doors has opened to our gaze,
And sordid man—from him we now turn to praise
Him who has fashioned with such wondrous plan
This sweet heaven on earth for poor fallen man.

Amidst the Berkshire hills—in this little nook,
Dwell fairy folk; of them we'll now take a look.
Of course in these days we scarce of fairies think,
But we'll call them such though in your thoughts we sink.
There are such—we meet them almost every day;
They help us often on this our weary way.
And though their forms today oft take human shape,
Still they are there; from them we cannot escape.
Then, too, if we did, the joys that should be ours
Would all be withered as neglected flowers.
Then we'll agree once more, in these days of prose,
To accept them as such—our argument we close.
We've seen the brooks, the trees, the beauteous flowers,
We'll now take you to the fairies' bowers.

Amidst the trees, the ferns, bordering on a brook,
Where water lilies bloom, in a secluded nook,
Here the fairies dwell, and in this sylvan scene
'Tis here they meet today with their fairy queen.
We will now take a peep through the wooded glen
List what they have to say of the sons of men.
But to describe them—this would be a task—
For many have tried, with what success we ask.
We'll not paint the lily, but leave to your mind
These wondrous fairy beings whom here we find.
The fairy queen enters—listen while she speaks—
"My dear subjects all, your queen now seeks
To know how those have fared in their commission,
Much was to be done, and all had my permission
To help the fallen and comfort those whose hearts
Were distressed and wounded in the cold world's marts,

Amongst the brooks and rills "

Some of them so hard, they were to be tender made;
Make a full report and do not be afraid.
I know there was much joy—thousands were made glad
Last Christmas day, though there still were many sad.
(But before you commence, of one I would ask,
Friend Watkins,—tell me, did you perform the task—
His reform, his daughter so earnestly sought
Whose tears and earnest prayers should alone have wrought
The great miracle, for naught less could it be
This poor man's spirit from its evil to free.
Speak up, dear Fay. Why dost thou hang thine head?
Thou would'st not have me believe the dear man dead?"
"No, no, most beauteous queen," Fay made reply,
"He is not dead, and most earnestly did I try
To bring him to a sense of his impending fate
And warn him of his ways e'er it was too late.
But naught that I could do had this effect.
He is alive and well, but in evil yet."
"Oh! Fay, oh! Fay, I am very sorely grieved
That this difficult task you have not achieved.
I knew 'twas hard, that was why I gave it you.
You had succeeded in many such, I knew.
This one task, dear Fay, I'll take greatest pleasure
In consulting about with you, at our leisure.
We'll devise some plan whereby we'll use our art
To win him from evil before we depart.)—
Now, my fairy subjects, your queen will hear all
The reports of the lowly, the great and the small.
Let there be joy and laughter, let there be mirth,
But first tell the sorrows you've found on the earth.
Let us temper with wisdom, source of our joy,
That some were lifted up—bliss without alloy.
To think we've been used poor humanity to raise,
Ours the joy of success—to Him be the praise."

Oh! could we, dear reader, but tell all they say
At this fairies' meeting e'er they went away,
It would take us so long and open our eyes
That we never could shut them for our surprise
It would be so great at the stories they told,
We'd commence when we're young and finish when old.
For they laid human hearts bare, and all the woe
That was brought on poor man by his greatest foe.
The things that are seen, they so soon pass away,
But those that are not seen are real and will stay.
Be content, dear reader, if one life we trace—
That of this man Hopkins, whose dear daughter Grace
So appealed to the queen of the fairies that day,
Who'd tried all the patience—defeated poor Fay.
We'll now leave the fairies for poor human ways
Where we're much more at home in these prosy days,
And leave fairy land and the fairies behind,
And seek in this world this man Hopkins to find.

It is strange, but those who travel most can tell
How small this world is, 'tis they who know so well.
We're here one day, a face we thought far away
Comes before our vision and to our dismay,
We turn a corner and another appears,
Who perhaps we have not seen for many years.
It all goes to show, the world's but very small
And that the human family is one after all,
And if we travel but far enough and wide,
No face that we have seen once can from us hide.
So we'll on our journey, we shall surely find
The man mentioned by the fairies 'mongst mankind.

A busy street in large and bustling city,
Where men seek fortune and not love or pity,

Amidst the whirl and strife, where strict business rules,
Testing the strength of men, and no place for fools.
Here dwells Josiah Hopkins, a man of might;
A man with single thought and that, too, to fight
For great wealth, and he had stored up very much.
All turned to gold—he had King Midas' touch.
His cry was for more, like Alexander of old,
Who conquered all worlds—he wanted all the gold.
He had but just the one thought—more to attain,
Insatiable appetite—his one passion, gain.
He wasn't a bad man, that is, as the world goes;
Of course, he had friends and a number of foes;
These hated with an earnest and genuine hate,
While his friends did not love him—sad to relate;
For though they were enemy or friend they'd agreed,
'Twas better to leave him alone to his screed.
All were afraid to cross his path—he was cruel,
Would brook no restraint, was subject to no rule.

We'll retrace our steps to many years before,
When Josiah Hopkins was young and very poor;
When he lived in Berkshire midst those lovely hills,
Where the quiet solitude, the minds of men fills
With awe and delight; for many wondrous hours
Josiah spent quite near to the fairies' bowers,
And helped his old father, till the fertile soil;
He was carefree then, and inured to toil;
And amongst the country folk where e'er he went,
He was always welcomed—for good cheer he lent
To all occasions, and his smiling, gallant way,
Gave him freedom to come and go as he may,
Amongst the lowly and those of highest rank,
For he was joyous, good looking, honest, frank.

'Twas here an event in Josiah's life occurred,
That changed his whole future and fierce trouble stirred
The Squire was rich and had one lovely daughter,
Whom he loved—guarded with the greatest hauteur.
He was proud—one of the overbearing kind,
A more pompous man you could scarcely find;
And Cupid one day—little mischief maker—
Challenged Josiah, and dared him to take her.
She was nothing loath, and with him shortly fled,
And in a distant town they were quickly wed.
They crossed the ocean and on the western shore
They commenced life as many have done before.
The Squire was furious and on dire mischief bent;
The hatred for Josiah such, he'd ne'er relent.
He tried all his arts, his daughter to win back;
'Twas years ere he succeeded in his attack.

Of course, she had found out as many before,
That love in a cottage on a far distant shore
Was not all that's desired, and was oft distressed,
Though Josiah did his utmost, his very best
To make her happy—reconciled to her lot
In the new land—the old was never forgot.
They had one lovely daughter, they named her Grace.
This for a while appeased, but did not efface
Memory of that home where she ne'er knew care;
This drove poor Josiah to the verge of despair.
One day a letter arrived, and with all speed,
Asked daughter to hasten to father in need,
For he was like to die—would she come right away?
She could return home, and at no distant day
With Josiah she pleaded to win his consent.
He resisted a while, but at last gave assent,

On condition only that their dear baby girl
Should remain with Josiah—she was his pearl;
He would not part with, for no matter the price.
She pleaded all in vain; naught would entice
Him to part with his child—she must go alone.
He'd hold her for hostage—thus she should atone.
He was afraid the Squire would use all his art
To hold her from him—could she with her child part.
The day came—they parted—and for many years—
Thus was confirmed all his suspicions—his fears.
From the day she departed a great change was wrought.
He was stern and heartless and had but one thought,
To gain immense wealth—set his mind to the task,
No favor of mortal man would he now ask.
But he'd wrest from the world that which gave power,
Show father and daughter—he'd wait for that hour,
When he could overthrow him, who, with such contempt,
Had taken his wife—he'd not hold him exempt.
He'd train his mind, and center all to that day,
When he could ruin the Squire—take his wife away.
We now see how this change in Hopkins was wrought,
And we also see now the great vengeance he sought.
So we'll now get back to the time when poor Fay
Made report to the queen of the fairies that day.

We'll now enter the home, learn more of the man,
Take a glimpse of his heart, that is if we can.
See if the reports of his friends and his foes,
Are the truth, or only just what the world knows
Of a man that's been soured—a man that's been tried,
Whom she that he loved, has most greatly defied.
Here's no cottage now but a mansion in size,
Where luxury abounds and wealth greets the eyes,

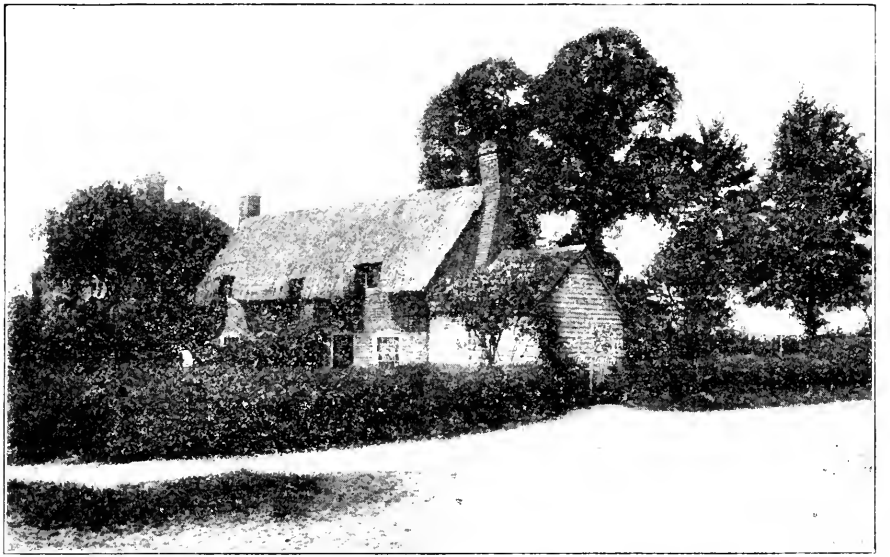
And all for that loved one, that dear daughter Grace,
She was the light of his eyes—and this the place,
The one spot on earth where he found greatest joy;
And no cloud entered this mansion to annoy.
This one whom his heart would protect against care;
She was his one great joy, and exceedingly fair.
He's here in the parlor, we together will gaze
Into the bright fire and there watch its bright blaze.
Listen, he's now talking, as oft was his wont,
When no one was near, 'twas then old thoughts would haunt.
"To me she was so dear, she taught me to hate,
And my life has been desolate—sad such a fate.
All that I've strived for—all that I have gained,
Has been but great loss, and loss that has pained.
The cottage with her, 'twas there I first knew joy,
If she'd been contented—bliss without alloy
Would have been mine, but now, a heart full of hate,
And vengeance 'tis now in my power to sate.
That man grown so old, I have in my power,
And now for my vengeance, it's near to the hour."
While he thus mused, a form stands at the door;
His daughter, it must be, we've not seen before.
We've mentioned her name, tried her portrait to paint,
But we've not done justice; our picture is faint
Of the beauty that stands now before our gaze.
But 'tis for her sweet mind we reserve all our praise.
She was full of thoughtful kindness—all she met
Loved her for her gentle ways, none could forget
That sweet look of interest that shone in her eyes;
A voice low and gentle to hear was to prize.
She looks now with love on the form sitting there,
Her father, dear to her, in that easy chair.
She approaches his side, throws arms around his neck,
Kisses him, while sweet smiles her loving face deck.

"Oh! father, dear father," we hear her now say,
"Tell me, sir, where have you been all this long day.
What have you been doing, you look full of care.
Now tell me the truth, or you'd better beware?"
'Twas thus with her prattle she'd lead him away
From cares and troubles at the end of each day.
Is this the stern man, of whom all are afraid,
So gentle and so kind, why, she's not dismayed.
And 'tis love fills his eyes and tenderest care
For that dear loving daughter so sweet and so fair.
"Oh! my dearest daughter, sit down by my side,
I've something to tell you, my joy and my pride,
Prepare for a journey that we must soon take
To the land of my birth. It makes my heart ache,
When I think of the years I've passed on this soil;
The years of false hopes and the long years of toil.
My mind wanders back to the days of my youth,
Long before you were born—those sweet days of truth,
Ere I tasted of love—knew aught of the world,
Or against me deceit, or hatred were hurled.
When I, like you, darling, was full of content,
And sorrow and suffering then had not bent
My mind to the world, it to conquer or die.
For riches I'd no thought, for it did not try;
But peace, yes, and quiet, they filled my whole mind,
And I'll take you to the place where this you'll find.
But before I do this, I have work to do
That concerns only me, but may concern you.
But of this later on; prepare you to go.
We'll depart in the spring and fleeting of snow.
I'll take you to a spot where sweet fairies dwell,
Where peace reigns supreme, where no toll of the bell,
Calls to labor, but where sweet birds sing the praise
Of Him who has made them and there spend their days."

"Oh! dear father, I'm glad," his daughter replied,
"I've longed the place to see where those fairies hide.
You've told me so much of them, they're real to me.
I long for the spot where the fairies I'll see,
Of which oft you've spoken, and I'll see for myself
The place where they meet—the fairy and elf.
You fill me with delight—my mind's full of praise
For what you have given me all these dear days.
You now fill my cup overflowing with joy;
Your thoughtful care gives me bliss without alloy."

In Berkshire, a mansion, we'll not give its name,
It was of ancient date, not unknown to fame;
And the lord who lived there was proud and quite old,
Was known to have heart that was chillingly cold,
Or such was reported by those who should know;
And to take dire offense he was not so slow.
As we said, he was proud, of imperious will,
And this with his neighbors had wrought him great ill.
He lived with a daughter who some people said
Was married quite young, and to the States had fled,
But had returned home after just a few years,
Repenting her act with most bitter tears.
Of course, this is the Squire, who lives at this place,
The daughter—the wife and the mother of Grace;
Josiah Hopkins, the husband, who had betrayed
The confidence of Squire and innocent maid.
This was the story as it was freely told
To the neighbors around—the young and the old.
And Josiah never refuted—never laid claim,
Had never as yet tried to clear his good name.

We'll enter this mansion, where these two now dwell,
List to the story they between themselves tell.



"And helped his old father till the fertile soil"

It may furnish a lesson—open our eyes,
And perhaps there are things that may greatly surprise.
They both are unhappy—he with his stern will,
She, with thoughts of home, that now haunt her still;
Thoughts of that daughter, whom she left in that land
With forsaken husband—like a fierce fire brand.
'Tis one life of torture—to her it was shame
From the day she left, since to this place she came.
"Father, why did you tempt to come to this place?
I'd done nothing to shame you, naught to disgrace.
I but married the man, the one I could love.
He was kind, he was good as the angels above.
And my daughter. Oh! that sweet lovely face!
When I think of it all 'tis then my disgrace
Fills my heart with remorse—my brains all afire.
Speak not, I command. I care not for your ire.
You have trained me to hate, not him—but myself,
Who left husband and child for most filthy pelf;
For shadow of things I left the real behind,
And since then, in this life, no pleasure I find.
You talk of your mansion, your pride and your wealth.
It's self you are talking of—always of self.
And he, my dear husband, he had but one thought,
To please me, and with life's blood he would have bought
One smile from my lips, 'twas more precious to him
Than the wealth of Indies, pride of birth or kin.
I tell you, I hate it, all this hollow show,
There's nothing about it, and that you well know,
That can satisfy hearts, set the mind all at rest,
Or replace a child to a mother's aching breast.
Sometimes I feel like leaving all far behind,
And return to him who was always so kind.
My darling daughter—whom I left to his care.
My heart seems drawn out in one wail of despair.

Oh, Money! Oh, Pride! that's all a man knows,
But he can't understand a poor mother's woes.
Love for her child, desire to see her dear face,
Not to do so, 'tis madness; there's the disgrace."
He whom she addressed was a man, feeble, old,
Full of stern pride, and calculations most cold.
He'd tried to gain wealth in a round-about way,
But he met with misfortunes, and that very day,
Had heard news of his ruin, and should it be true,
Most dire results would accrue to these two.
"Now, daughter, sit down, and just listen to me,
I've much to tell you, and then perhaps you will see
That you're not the only one suffering here.
I'll not mince the matter, but make myself clear.
While you have been raving, of what has long passed,
My mind has been harassed—the time's come at last,
When we must both leave this ancient home of mine,
And seek soon an asylum in some other clime.
I am ruined, yes ruined, will this satisfy,
Or now daughter of mine, will you still defy?
The old man, who though proud and haughty may be,
Still he's your own father and thought much of thee.
If I have done wrong, remember, you were the cause.
You defied all my wish, broke all my laws,
By marrying the man whom I most heartily hate.
You returned here, 'tis true, but then 'twas too late.
I had expected an heir, and one of great name,
But you gave me a son, that brought me but shame.
I am ruined, and now, you can leave me alone.
Go back to your hut, listen not to my groan.
I have decked you with diamonds, gave you a name,
In spite of what you did—in spite of your shame.
Go back to that cot, you say he loves you well,
The poor plodding plow-boy, that offspring of hell.

I have always hated the wretch that dispoiled
This home of my daughter, my disloyal child.
Go, I say, to this husband—see your dear brat,
And leave the old man ruined—just think of that.
This will add to your comfort, add to your glee;
When away in that cottage,—then think of me."
She had not suspected—she had not forseen,
It entered her mind as a hideous dream.
Could it be possible—could all this be true,
What he had just told her, for she never knew
How her father had tried—had tried all in vain,
For more wealth and more power—thus to obtain.
She fell down before him, and in her despair,
Tried to calm her father—the man sitting there.
"Oh, father, I beg of you, pray, pray, be still,
Or worse may befall and you'll come to some ill;
I'd no thought that your mind with trouble was filled;
I thought but of myself—my mind is now stilled,
To listen to you, see if we cannot plan
Some way to avoid disaster if we can.
I'll think no more of self—I'm at your command,
And I'll help if you'll let me—this I demand.
Tell me the sad story—how it all came about;
I'll help you now, father, trust me without doubt.
Be calm, yes and patient and then in this way,
We'll see light in the darkness of this dreadful day."
'Twas thus she now spoke—she'd not spoken for years
In this way to him—trouble had cast out fears.
We'll leave them to find now a way if they can;
They may yet discern it—we'll leave them to plan.
But there's one thing discovered we've seen in this place,
That she's not all selfish—the mother of Grace.

Josiah Hopkins had returned to his native land,
As we noted not long since when he had planned,
And with him he had brought his dear daughter Grace,
Who had longed in that home to visit the place.
What is it brings him back to the land of his birth,
A place where he'd known joy, spot dearest on earth?
Was it that he might see the old and loved spot;
The place once called home, never to be forgot?
No, my dear reader, this was not what was planned.
This had not brought him to his own native land,
But 'twas to seek vengeance on that treacherous man.
This his one thought and his long conceived plan,
To wreak vengeance on him who had taken his wife,
For this he had schemed the best part of his life.
The Squire had not noticed or heard of his fame,
Because his business was done in other name.
'Tis true he'd heard of Hopkins—great money king,
To connect him with Josiah was another thing.
In fact it was this firm that had brought him low,
The man he hated, and his most bitter foe,
Who'd now gloat o'er the Squire and surfeit his hate—
This was the object of Josiah, sad to relate.
He'd now show that wife the great scorn that he felt,
And the Squire he'd crush for the way he had dealt.
His mind had been filled with thoughts of vengeance for years
That naught now could hinder—no pleading or tears.
He was a man of resolve, most stern of will,
And nothing could turn him, he'd repay all the ill,
And with interest, yes, he would be nothing loath,
He'd sworn to be revenged with a terrible oath.

— — ——

Near that little nook amidst the Berkshire hills,
Where we've seen the purling streams, brooklets and rills,

Amidst the wonders of this most beauteous scene
That rests the mind and restores to thoughts serene,
Two forms we see, they are walking hand in hand,
Viewing the beauties that are o'er all the land.
Let us look close, we have seen them perhaps ere now;
One is a lovely girl, the man with massive brow
Is Josiah Hopkins and 'tis his daughter Grace
Whom at last he has brought to this lovely place.
He's showing the beauties; they look o'er the vale
As on an eminence they view hill and dale.
"'Tis a lovely scene, so full of restful peace;
Could all the world but see, they would cease
From turmoil and strife and seek only that rest,
That here may be found to still the angry breast.
Oh! what peace, what quiet, here in fullness abounds;
That there should be strife among men, here astounds.
In view of all this calm, this most joyous scene,
'Tis scarcely real to me, but it is not a dream.
And 'tis here the fairies meet and plan for men,
I believe it, in that fair wooded glen."
Thus spoke sweet Grace, and with rapture in her eyes,
Looked into her father's face with great surprise.
His gaze was resting on one not far away,
That he had not seen for years until that day;
It was his long lost wife; she'd come to that spot.
Was this all chance, or was it a fairy plot?
She saw him and recognized her husband's face.
Could that be her own daughter, her daughter Grace?
She rushed forward, and was falling at his feet,
But with arms outstretched his long lost wife he'd greet;
"Oh! husband, pardon, I on my knees would pray.
I had not thought of meeting you here this day.
Oh! my heart has longed 'midst all the pomp and pride
To confess my wrong, return to you," she cried.

"But alas, my pride, it would not let me go,
And my life has been full of agony and woe.
Oh, take me to that cot on that distant shore,
Which I've learned to love, perhaps never loved before."
Thus she spoke and what was her husband's greeting?
Was he pleased and full of joy at this meeting,
Or full of hate and on dire vengeance bent?
What about his dread oath,—would he relent?
Those good fairies, if they hear, must now rejoice,
For, "Oh! wife," he cried, in broken, loving voice,
"This is your own daughter, our sweet daughter Grace,
That we thus meet—I'm thankful 'tis in this place,
Where memories throng around your life and mine.—
Take her to your heart, she is mine and thine.
And what she has prayed for—on this spot's come true,
For she has never ceased, wife, to pray for you.
She's been my joy, consoled my lonely way,
Reminding me of you each and every day.
My heart has been filled with bitterness and hate;
Oh, wife, you returned before it was too late,
For I had vowed a vow and had you not returned,
Naught could have quenched the hate that in this heart burned.
To see your dear face and in this hallowed spot,
Brings to my mind my love, ne'er to be forgot.
Oh, wife! oh, wife! years of suffering and pain,
All have passed since we meet in this place again."
Joy and rapture filled his darling daughter's face;
It was heavenly joy that filled the heart of Grace.
But trouble was in her new-found mother's mind;
Yes, trouble and of the most desperate kind.
Her father, to him, she must now take them both;
Her daughter fair, of her, she was nothing loath.
But of Josiah, after what he that day had said,
Still she'd do it though he should strike her dead.

Josiah read her thoughts, trouble was in her look,
But he'd face her father now, no ill he'd brook.
They now walked to the mansion not far away,
And it was nearing fast the close of day.
"My own dear wife, I'll ask one favor now;
Let Grace be the one to cancel all my vow.
She shall see him first and she shall take a note
To tell him I am here. There is much I wrote.
But I'll add some words. It will not take long,
When I hope right may come from all this wrong."
They'd entered the house, he gave him pen and ink.
She scarcely knew just how or what to think.

The old Squire was seated in his easy chair,
His mind filled with dread thoughts and anxious care.
All his striving for great wealth had come to naught,
And now, after battle of life was nearly fought,
He was in poverty. How should he pass his days,
Those that remained? He's pondering means and ways.
A gentle timid knock upon his study door,
Something disturbs his mind as naught before.
For the door did not open at his behest,
So he arose to admit the unknown guest.
He opened the door and to his great surprise,
There stood his daughter—could he believe his eyes?
Yet, 'twas not his daughter; she was young and fair,
As she had been years past, the same eyes and hair.
She speaks, in that gentle voice. What does she say?
"I've come to see you, please turn me not away.
I bring a letter, will you not read it now?
It will perhaps explain who I am and how
I came here." The old Squire offered her a chair,
And gazed with wonder on this young maiden fair.

His mind was perturbed, but not a word he said,
He seated himself, then broke the seal and read:
"The bearer is your own grand daughter, Grace,
Who seeks your love, to me denied in this place.
Let her tell the story, she has seen my wife,
And she now knows the sad story of my life.
With this another letter you will now find,
Which do not read if to her you are not kind."
He looked on this fair girl, memories of the past
Sped through his mind, and they came both thick and fast.
His grand-daughter, could it be, this young girl so fair?
Could she be the child of this disloyal pair?
He could not resist, he'd hear the story now,
Though thoughts of the past brought darkness to his brow.
"Take this chair," he said, "I'll list to all you say.
It's strange they should have sent you here in this way,
But there may be a reason that perhaps I shall know,
And I'll listen until you this reason show."
"Dear grandpa, for such you are to me, they say,
I've come a distance to see you, and this day
Has been most joyous, for I've seen my mother,
Whom I've longed to know more than any other.
And you, dear grandpa, whom I have never known,
I want your love, too, and as my very own."
She rose and kissed him, and this stern old Squire
Melted before her and there was naught of ire.
As he took her hand in his, she smiling, said:
"The other letter, dear grandpa, you have not read,
But before you read I have another here,
Which I was told to give if I had no fear.
And I have none, for you have been very kind.
In this letter more explanations you'll find."
He broke the seal and then read to his surprise.
Wonder, and something of fear filled his eyes.

"They now walked to the mansion not far away."

"You have not seen in me the one now who holds
All this estate, Josiah Hopkins here unfolds
The secret. He is the one whom you have hated.
I too, have returned it until I am sated.
If you read this, 'tis because she's won your love,
My dear daughter, Grace, whom I prize far above
All wealth, all name, title or other station.
She's more to me than riches of a nation.
If this be true, and you accept and love her,
Then I humbly plead forgiveness, wait in fear
To hear from you; your daughter, my wife and I
Send word by Grace, for we both are here near by.
But there is one thing more, if you thus decide,
Break the seal, for this other package doth hide
My pleas for this favor and then you will see
I'm offering good fellowship and love to thee."
He broke the seal—and a deed, restoring more
Than the large estate he had long held before.
Grace saw him turn quite pale. What could all this mean?
"Your mother, child, and your father I've not seen.
Tell them to come, I would see them here today.
Are they both near? They cannot be far away."

'Tis Christmas time. The whole mansion's filled with life,
And through those echoing halls no sound of strife.
Gladness and joy abound o'er this festive scene,
No tear dimmed eye, no contention to be seen,
But peace, joy, good will on earth is herein found
In hearts and faces, it doth everywhere abound.
The place is decked with brightest holly green,
Loving, cheerful faces everywhere are seen.
And the Squire and Grace? Why, here they smiling come,
Welcoming all their guests, each and every one.

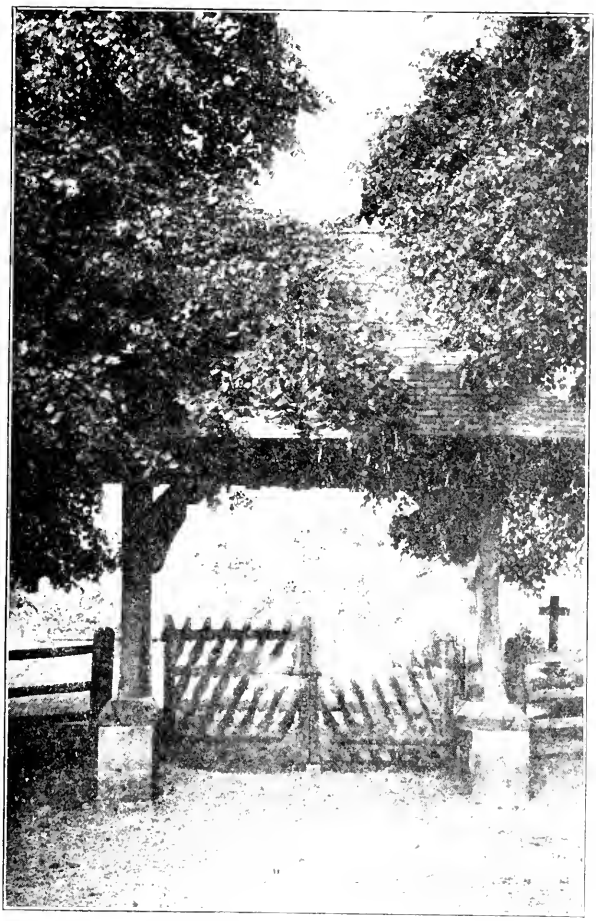
At the festive board they all now take their place,
The Squire at head, on right his grand-daughter Grace.
Whilst near at hand amongst the honored guests we see
Josiah Hopkins and wife, happy as can be.

The Squire is speaking, list to what he may say:
"Dear friends, it is Christmas time and on this day
We all should have our hearts filled with love and peace.
I have a great lesson learned and shall not cease
To praise one to whom I owe the greatest debt
One man can owe another, and with regret
I now ask pardon before all our guests this day,
For aught in the past, I've said in hateful way
Of my friend Josiah, my own dear loving son,
Who by the greatest kindness my heart has won.
For he has crushed me, not with wrath or hate,
But with love, for he held in his hands my fate,
And in marvelous way, I scarcely understand,
He's won my heart: before all I take his hand.
I owe him much. May I live but to repay
The debt of gratitude I owe him this day.
'Tis six months past, he found me near undone,
And in that time his love my heart has won."
They knew the story, but in this public way,
The Squire took occasion to tell all this day.
Joy filled each heart at such a glorious deed,
Where love had conquered hate to man in need.

The fairy glen amidst those shaded bowers,
Where lilies grow and many beauteous flowers.
It is the day the fairies meet here their queen,
And joy, it reigns amongst them and peace supreme,

For Fay whose failure had cast gloom o'er all,
Has caused rejoicing to both great and small.
The queen enters smiling and all know the cause,
For hate has been turned to love 'gainst all laws.
"My fairy subjects, with me rejoice today,
And you whom I reproved, my dearest Fay,
We will all rejoice, as one, that we have found
A way to bring our friends to the fairy ground.
Josiah Hopkins, his wife and Grace, on this spot,
Have learned a lesson never to be forgot,
That love is stronger much than old fearsome hate,
And Josiah has found this out ere 'twas too late.
Let joy and gladness now overflow each heart.
We'll rejoice together once more ere we part."

Now the story's told, there's little more to say,
But just a few words may now perhaps clear the way,
And show us how, though our puny efforts fail,
We may at length into smoother waters sail.
Grace married a Lord, to the old Squire's delight,
So you see, in the end, all came out quite right.



"Listen to those chiming bells."

John Grimshaw

John Grimshaw

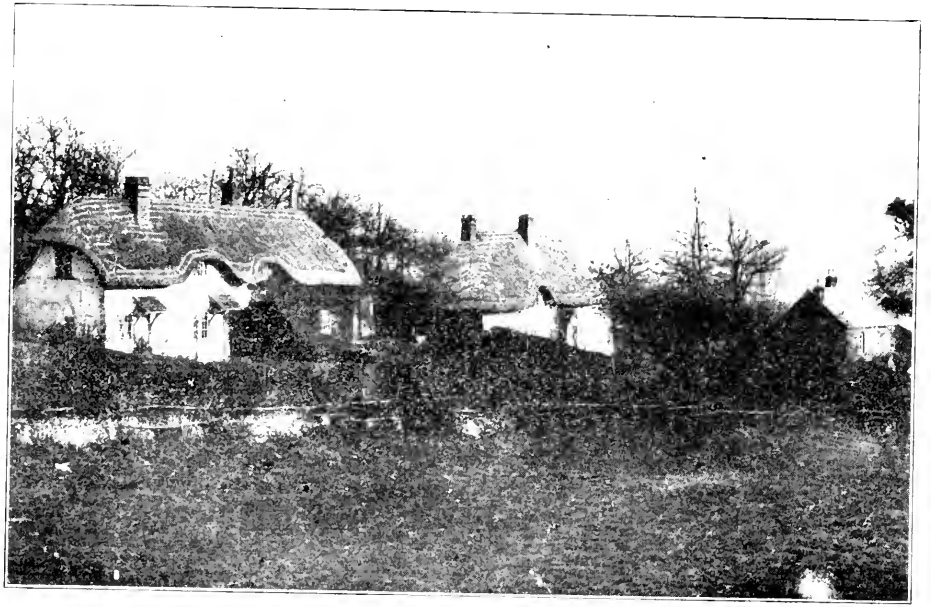
My story, unlike most Christmas stories told,
Is neither new nor is it very old.
It does not commence with once upon a time,
But begins about the year eighteen eighty-nine.
Nor does it deal with fairy, ghoul or goblin,
But with facts which sometimes are more troublin'.
I shouldn't say it had no fairy; that would be
Something like Christmas without a Christmas tree.
I think the elf may appear after a time,
If for no other reason than for the rhyme.

John Grimshaw, old and a man of iron will,
That is, he looked old, he'd spent his life so ill;
Not in crime or wickedness—that is not meant,
But in sordid selfishness his time was spent.
The thought of others never occupied his mind;
'Twould be difficult a more selfish man to find.
And yet those who knew him years and years ago
Say John Grimshaw was not always so.
There was a time when his long-dead mother said
He was her every joy and winner of the bread
For all his sisters and a younger brother
Left to the care of his poor widowed mother.
Such unselfish devotion was rare indeed to find,
John Grimshaw in younger days was more than kind.
His sisters married, one by one. All were gone
Except the younger brother, and John alone,

Next to leave that home was this dear mother,
Who died blessing him and his younger brother.
This brother William was very dear to John,
And this is the point my story will turn upon.
John, who like most young men of the present day
Fell deep in love with one named Margery Gray.
They were to be wedded soon, had all prepared,
When an event which upset John's plans occurred.
William, false to his fond and trusting brother,
Wooed Margery from her troth and won her.
On a Christmas eve the pair they went away;
The next was to have been John's wedding day.

The genial John, friend and brother, kind and true,
From that day was dead, and no one ever knew
Why old John Grimshaw, with sour and bitter life,
With no bright home, children or loving wife,
Had become an old skinflint and a miser,
For his lips were closed, and none were the wiser.
As he had been kind before, now his lonely life
Was filled with bitterness, hatred and strife,
And so from day to day he the harder grew—
He won hatred and ill will from all he knew.
Grasping for great wealth, his only idol now,
It had changed the man, brought wrinkles to his brow,
And soured his looks, so that love fled with pain
From him whose life was now devoted but to gain.

Down a dark street that scarce sees the light of day,
With old buildings on each side, we'll wend our way.



"It is the old village you once knew so well."

We stop at the poorest structure of them all
And read the sign, "Money to loan, John Grimshaw"
A most repellant place, we'll step in and see
Just what John Grimshaw in his home can be.
For this is his home and place of business, too;
Many pass his door, those that enter are but few.
A room furnished meagerly and without care,
There is no thought of ease or comfort there
It serves as business office and parlor, too.
Is dark and uninviting as are but few.
The light of day seldom brightens up this place,
As if it were ashamed the proud world to face.
It is winter time, and the room is heated
By fire in open grate, at which is seated
In a large arm chair, John Grimshaw. Let us see
What kind of a looking man he's come to be.
He is tall and sallow, with wrinkled brow,
And hard and determined look that make men bow
Before his will—and whose light blue, flashing eyes
Pierce you through and through, ne'er taken by surprise.
We will look at him as he sits in deep thought,
With tight pressed lips and mind that's 'tently wrought,
A man fighting against himself and the world.
Soured and discontented, and who has hurled
Defiance to all and who asks no quarter,
E'en though the first to perish in the slaughter;
This is the man he looks like and we shall see
He is all our fancy painted him to be.
A young girl now enters the room with a light,
For the day is fast closing toward the night.
She speaks to him. Listen what has she to say:
"Uncle, it soon will again be Christmas day;
I would like very much if you could spare me soon
To visit all my relations at my home;

And dear mamma, whom I've not seen so long.
I hear she is ailing and not very strong.
Do not get angry now, but for just this time
Let me spend Christmas with these friends of mine."
"The same old question, girl, I'd have you know
That you are here to stay and you cannot go
Or, if you do, why then what you call home,
There you can stay and to this one never come.
Christmas, relic of barbarism; can it be
That you have not yet sense enough to see
That it is a time of riot and lustful waste?
But then it is every one to his own taste;
You have asked this question many times before,
But I tell you, if you go, I'll close the door."
She answered him, with tears streaming in her eyes.
He looked up at her with more than deep surprise.
Never before had she thus persisted so.
"For mamma's sake dear uncle, please let me go."
"For your mamma's sake," he replied, and a look
Shot from those cold eyes; she saw he would not brook
To be further questioned upon this subject,
And gave in to him in despair quite abject.

Martha Grimshaw was his niece; she little knew
The storm raised by the name of one to her true,
Her loved mother, for her uncle had not told
How she had deceived him, and turned so cold
A heart that had loved her beyond the telling,
And even now almost burst with its swelling
At mention of her name. William was long since dead,
And he had called his brother to his dying bed

To ask forgiveness for all that he had done;
Treachery to him, the way his wife he'd won.
Though loving most dearly, yet they always felt
Unhappy when they thought of the way they'd dealt
With that gentle brother, whose life they'd wrecked.
Their hearts and consciences were in mourning decked.
That heart once so gentle now was turned to stone,
And naught that they could do ever would atone.
John would not forgive his repentant brother,
Nor his wife, who had now become a mother.
Years passed and the widow had most bitter trial,
And with the greatest effort and self-denial
Was unable to provide for this loved one.
In despair, and not knowing what to be done,
Appealed to John, who agreed to take her in
To help him and in this way her living win.

We'll now turn to Martha, see what she is like.
She has dark hair and eyes, but she does not strike
One as beauteous, and there's a haunted look
About her as if she had just read a book
That had disturbed her mind, she seemed afraid,
As one not at rest and who never prayed,
And yet if we look close we shall surely find
Both a cheerful and loving spirit there behind
Those cold looks, for though she rarely smiles,
Yet, when she does it lights her face and beguiles;
When the cloud is lifted that seems always there.
We see beauty reigns supreme amidst despair,
Behind that cloud lurks a disposition sweet
That you will but rarely find in those you meet;

But the many years with Uncle John she's dwelt
Have cast their shadows and his power she's felt.
From him she has had neither love nor kindness;
He has treated all advances with blindness.
He's quite closed her heart to make it like his own.
And where love should be despair sits on its throne.

John was not happy; he'd seen her tears with shame,
But his iron will and firm purpose just the same
Would not allow him to yield. His better self
Had a long time since been placed upon the shelf.
He sat brooding there, his conscience not at ease,
And on his face came a look so cold 'twould freeze
The warmest heart though with love and pity filled.
Was kindness in him hence forever killed?

Suddenly before him a bright form appeared.
Which to his mind in that place seemed strange and weird.
It was a woman, radiantly dressed and bright,
Who came into this dark place from out the night.
John looked up with anger mingled with surprise
At this great liberty, and looked into her eyes;
Demanded what she wanted and why she came;
Tell him at once her business and what her name.
"My name, it matters not, John Grimshaw; you see
One who has the power to make you answer me.
I've watched you long, I stand upon your right;
The one on your left is off her guard tonight.
I'm your good angel who has watched you day by day,
And from whom you many years have turned away.

But tonight you and I together are alone.
John Grimshaw, these many years how cold you've grown;
Grasping, bitter and full of hate; no wonder she
On thy left has such great power over thee.
But tonight 'tis willed by one who holds your fate
That you must listen, or else your future state
Will be with the one who has thus so far led
And whose present is woe and whose end is dread.
John Grimshaw, you have become quite wealthy.
You've attained your end, but it's not been healthy
For your poor body or your immortal soul.
What will you do, tell me, now you've reached the goal
Of all your ambition; your heart turned to hate;
Tell me, John Grimshaw, I ask in name of fate."
"Woman," he replied, "or what else you may be,
I do not see why I should reply to thee;
But perhaps the quickest way to end all this strife,
And since you seem familiar with my past life,
Is to answer your questions in my own way;
Then perhaps you may have a little less to say.
In the first place, then, I would have you know
That threats with John Grimshaw will never go;
He cares not what you say of him or his wealth,
Of his immortal soul, or of his bodily health;
By care and frugality he's made his money;
It's no one's business if he's not like honey.
What I have is my own and no one can say
That I gained a cent in a dishonest way."
He looked at her with the fiercest kind of glance.
She neither retreated nor did she advance;
But she cast on him a pitying look and said:
"John Grimshaw, your cold heart is not quite dead;
I've not watched you for years, day after day,
To be turned from you in this unfeeling way,

I've more to say and I'll say it all tonight;
And John Grimshaw, with you and fate I'll fight.
Let's go back some thirty years or more:
Let me call to mind what you were of yore,
John Grimshaw; then you were kind and always true
To that fond mother who loved you as but few;
Whom then you worshiped as one from heaven sent,
And to serve and please her was your one intent.
Then there were your three sisters and your brother,
He whom then you loved more than any other.
Your life was then one hard task on duty bent,
But you were always happy where'er you went.
Your loving sisters, they then looked up to you.
Who filled the place of one they scarcely knew.
Don't you remember the loving looks they gave
To you, John Grimshaw, then so young and brave?
You recollect how it filled your heart with joy
When your mother said 'God bless our boy.'
And William, don't you remember that sad day
When he in a fit of passion ran away?
You loved him then; he was so dear to you,
And you looked for him in every place you knew.
Then when you found him you must remember well
How his tears gushed forth and on your breast he fell,
And as he told you in his lisping, childish way
He'd never do again what he'd done that day.
Then you took him in your arms, carried him home,
Your heart, swelling with love for the now found one.
John Grimshaw, those were happy days, you know well,
And you remember those things of which I tell."
"Yes," he replied, "I remember them, and more;
But why call up those days? It is now two-score
Since they have passed and I have since then tried
From myself and other prying eyes to hide

The things that then occurred; they are wholly dead;
They are passed and gone; enough has been said.
I loved them. You say love, what does it mean?
Since then many bitter scenes and trials I've seen.
Love! don't talk to me of love; you know it well,
It is a subject on which I dread to dwell.
That is, I suppose you do, if what you say
Is true and you remember me in that day.
But they've forgotten how I loved and toiled.
And you, too, how the old man's life was spoiled.
The time is too long; they never think of me;
The past is dead, dead forever; let it be.
The world calls me selfish: I care not a jot,
For all the world's the same, a most selfish lot.
I fight with their own weapons and what care I,
I live, like them, for myself, and when I die
No one will mourn my loss or care for me,
But out of their sight, out of their memory."
As he said all this, 'twas with such a dark scowl,
His tones resembled more a distant growl.
He looked at her with eyes flashing defiance.
No signs there of compromise or compliance,
"John Grimshaw," she answered, with pitying smile,
"Please bear with me yet for just a little while.
The bitterness of your heart I know full well.
Of this one matter you have no need to tell.
One question I'll ask before we go further;
Which of them all has been the greatest loser?
When you say all the world's selfish that may be.
But then that was not always the case with thee.
Time once was when you of self ne'er thought;
Then you were happy and much happiness brought
To those many friends with whom you had to deal.
What changed you this way and made you thus to feel?

I'll tell you; do not think I'd cause you pain
If I did not think it would be for your gain.
It was when your brother took your promised bride;
He then crushed your heart and shocked your pride.
Since then the world is changed and in this act you see
All the world just as perfidious as he.
And think, John Grimshaw, but I will tell the tale;
You were unhappy and they too, both as well.
When the flush of youthful passion well was o'er
They thought of themselves with shame and would cower
To hide from their conscience the wrong they had done
To you, the kind brother, to them the loved one.
You little know the bitterness of remorse,
The canker to all their joys and you the source.
When William sent for you on his dying bed.
Though he longed to meet you, yet it was with dread
He asked for your pardon, and you but little know
How his poor aching heart was wrung with woe.
You went from that scene with heart as of a stone,
John Grimshaw, for this act you've much to atone.
Since then it has been harder than any flint.
And you have caused unhappiness without stint."
"Well," he answered, "why bring all this to my mind?
What pleasure in opening old wounds do you find?
If in the past I found pleasure as you say,
What's that to do with the Grimshaw of today?
Whose heart's been turned to bitterness by great wrong,
And whose love is turned to hatred just as strong.
I have tried all this from my own heart to hide.
But it seems to me that for years you have pried
Into the innermost recesses of my heart.
And therefore have learned just how to make it smart.
Those you speak of have forgot I e'er drew breath
Or if they remember wish only for my death.

"Then you took him in your arms, carried him home"

It's the way of the world, as we get older,
We think less of what's called love and we grow colder.
I've been rough and stern, I've trained myself that way;
To gain success all men must be so today.
Sentiment and what's called love are left to those
Who wear them like they would a suit of clothes,
To show off their points and captivate a few.
I'd much rather be stern, if you like, but true.
As to causing unhappiness, I'd like to know
Just what you mean, when this in my face you throw."
"John Grimshaw," she replied, "you are not so true
To yourself, if you are to the very few
With whom you come in contact day by day.
To whom you are John Grimshaw in a business way.
I'll admit your dealings always have been just,
Even though your heart was filled with greed and lust
For wealth, and you sought by every means you knew
To add to that vast fortune possessed by few.
I'll take one case to illustrate what I say:
You were not true to yourself with Martha today."
He gave a great start, his eyes began to gleam.
"Why bring up this case," he said; "what do you mean?"
"Don't start, John Grimshaw, you cannot hide from me;
I'm near you always, your every act I see.
All your thoughts to me are open as a book.
I care not for your smile or your sardonic look.
Listen! When that child you took 'twas bitter hate
On that poor loving mother you wished to sate.
The half-orphaned child you knew to her was dear.
The loving mother's heart you crushed without fear.
You see, I know and am not afraid to tell
What prompted you to this darkest deed of hell;
But, John Grimshaw, something I still further know;
And to yourself, yourself I'll now plainly show

She's won her way by gentleness to your heart,
Cold as it now is. John Grimshaw, do not start;
And the way you daily treat her only turns
Upon your own heart, and with brands of fire burns
Into your mind one word you dare not name
To yourself, but in your consciousness it is 'shame.'
I've seen you watching her daily as she works
In your office, and behind that coldness lurks
A look of tenderness that takes you back to days
When happiness, John, was yours in many ways.
Then it is followed by a look chill as death
You fight back those tender thoughts with bated breath.
And then you are stern and cold, most cruel, too.
And thus as I've said, John Grimshaw, you're not true;
You'd hide from yourself the workings of your heart.
And thus unwittingly you play a double part.
You deceive yourself in many ways, I'll show
Plainly this night before I will let you go.
It's Christmas time, as Martha has just now said,
We'll go back a year; see those who wish you dead."
As thus she spoke she took him by the hand,
And he seemed to make a journey o'er the land—
"Listen to those chiming bells; 'tis Christmas day;
John Grimshaw, that's the church where you used to pray.
It is the old village you once knew so well;
That your sisters still live here I need not tell.
Let us enter here this Christmas night and see
Twelve months gone past, what still they thought of thee.
Your sister Jane, she has grown aged with care;
The family load has not set so lightly there.
Her husband's been ailing for a long time past,
But he is up again and around at last."
They entered a large room that was well lighted
And sat down there as guests but not invited.

'Tis a family reunion, and all are there,
John in memory, to all there still so dear.
One chair at head of table each Christmas day
Is reserved for him since the day he went away.
It was a large gathering, and all the faces shone
With such great pleasure, it smote the heart of John.
He saw there Jane, her husband and three grown boys;
His sister Ann and the sharer of her joys,
With their loving children, two boys and three girls.
Mary, his little favorite, whose sunny curls
Took back his memory years and years ago,
With her husband and happy children too.
Now listen, Jane is speaking, and we shall hear
Something of these who have met for Christmas cheer.
"Well, dear sisters and children," she smilingly said,
And our loving husbands, before we break bread,
As is our custom at this most happy time,
I being the oldest of the Grimshaw line,
Will give thanks to Him who in His marvelous way
Sent His only Son, who was born on Christmas day,
For all the blessings He has to us vouchsafed
These many years, though many times we chafed
Under great difficulties at times hard to bear;
Yet we've gone through them all with His tender care.
We have to thank Him for the memory of one
Dear to all of us, our loving brother John.
His chair is there; some day he will fill that place,
And then John himself, as first, will say the grace."
Then in simple words she asked the blessing,
And all beamed with smiles whom she'd been addressing.
John Grimshaw saw and heard; not a word he said;
But with sorrow and shame now hung down his head.
"One more place we'll visit." she said, "ere we go.
Come with me another scene of last year I'll show."

They enter a sick chamber, and there they find
A handsome woman with gentle face and kind,
Waiting on one that's ill, lying there in bed,
With pale and shrunken face, looking like one dead.
She speaks: "Dear sister, it is now Christmas day;
"Did Martha come? Tell me at once, I pray."
The one waiting on her looked with pitying eyes.
It's the same old story, her uncle denies.
"Oh! love, it is retribution for my dark sin
To you, my loving sister, and against him.
If it had not been for my jealousy of thee
He might have loved thee better than he did me.
I did not care for him, but his life I wrecked,
And yours, dear sister, with grief I decked.
The day I found you loved him better than life
I determined then that I would be his wife.
But William came and pleaded with me so hard,
And I loved William—he had all my regard;
I could not resist, but, like the wretch I am,
I spoiled your life and that of the only man
You ever cared for. This was known to him;
I told him ere I committed this great sin.
That you loved him better, far better, than I.
I never told you this, sister; do not cry.
You have been constant in your love till today,
And your youth in hardship has passed away."
"Oh! do not say that," she answered, "nor reprove
Yourself for what you've done. I indeed did love
John Grimshaw, but I little thought you told
As of that which to me you this night unfold.
Do not trouble your mind, but try rather to get well.
I have something which I, too, would like to tell.
My life has not been trial, but happiness indeed.
It is not trial to minister to those in need.

What little I've done has filled my heart with joy,
And my life with happiness without alloy."
As she spoke the glistening tears they passed away,
Leaving her face radiant as the brightest day.
John Grimshaw stretched forth his hand to touch his guide.
But found that somehow she had left his side.
He was alone, 'twas dark, he felt like screaming,
And awoke with a start—he had been dreaming.

Strange it is what fancies fill the mind in sleep,
Sometimes bringing to the surface what's burned deep,
So deep in our hearts that in our conscious hours
Never troubles our mind—and by subtle powers
Changing the whole course of our life, and we
Are enabled things in a better light to see.
'Twas so with John Grimshaw; from that very day
All had changed with him, the old had passed away.
That is not exactly right; I should have said
Young John was alive again—the old was dead.
When Martha saw him next day she scarce believed,
And she wondered if her eyes had not deceived;
For in place of a frown, his usual greeting,
His face was wreathed with smiles at the meeting;
And when he spoke his voice had such gentle tone
She could scarcely believe that it was his own.
He was sitting in the same chair as last night,
But out of his eyes to her shone a new light.
He called her to his side. "Martha," then he smiled,
"I had a dream last night which seemed weird and wild.
And yet it was scarce a dream, it was so real
I would like the same dream to continue still.

Stand on my right, Martha, and I will say
What I intended when she went away—
I mean my guardian angel of good intent,
Who's been ever present and on goodness bent.
And then in the kindest way he took her hand.
These are things, Martha, you do not understand,
But you will comprehend this much when I say
That Grimshaw as you've known him has passed away.
I have been shown myself in such a baneful light.
You, Martha, shall take place with her on my right,
For you, dear niece, by the gentleness of your ways
Have been the means of showing me my evil days.
Now prepare, for this day you shall surely go
And see all those dear friends who love you so."
Oh! John Grimshaw, you are indeed well repaid
By that tender look; nor was she now afraid.
But with loving arms clasped round his neck,
She kissed him, and happy smiles their faces deck.

My story's almost told, as you may suppose;
But there are a few things yet before I close.
The dream was more true than they usually are.
It was true about the party and the chair;
And it was also true about the sister who
Loved John Grimshaw and all these years was true.
But I think John had kept posted all these days,
And this would account for it in many ways;
For his conscience and Martha he could not shirk.
And the dream did the balance of the work.

A large Christmas gathering, and this is no dream,
Though the same faces before we've seen.
Who's that at head of table, sitting there
In what for many years was an empty chair?
Why, can that be John Grimshaw, with smiling face?
Listen, he's about to rise and say the grace:
"My dear brothers, sisters, nephews, nieces, too,
It is with unfeigned joy I meet with you
Around this festive board where you reserved for me
A place, and where I so much contentment see.
Mine has been the loss; I've been poor and blind;
It is here true wealth in happiness I find.
None can realize the truth of what I say
More truly than he who speaks to thee today;
And this glorious day celebrates an event
That should fill our hearts with love and content.
For the one whose birth this day commemorates
Left all, not earthly but heavenly estates,
Came down to the level of the poorest man.
Emptied himself, part of a wondrous plan,
To bring peace and good will both to friend and foe,
And in the sight of heaven and men to show
That it is better to give than to receive;
And thus giving Himself, saved all who believe.
So let joy fill all your hearts as it does mine,
While we thank Him for this one great gift divine."
He asked the blessing in such simple way,
That all remembered it for many a day.
And Martha, she is sitting near on his right;
It's nothing like the Martha we saw that night.
But her face is lit up with smiles, beauty rare,
Without a cloud to mar and no fear is there
But with loving eyes she looks into his face,
And her manner is filled with gentle grace.

Another Christmas, another face we know,
Though we had only a glimpse some time ago,
Martha Gray, sister of William Grimshaw's wife,
Who had been so true to John through all her life,
She this Christmas day became his happy bride,
And her sister Margery now stands by her side.
"My sister, this day is joy to me indeed;
I feel that my guilty past has been retrieved"
And John; let us take a look at him once more,
Ere upon this, the last scene, we close the door.
No more fighting 'gainst himself and all the world,
For he the banner of love has now unfurled.
It has changed the man; he is young again;
You'd not know "Old Grimshaw" in this happy swain.

Ring, ring those merry chimes, louder, louder peal,
To record the blessed gift for man's great weal.

"Ring joyous bells with merry chime."

The Christmas Bride

The Christmas Bride

The old story, so often told,
Of true love and a world so cold.

ONE Christmas day my tale begins,
Loud and joyous the church chime rings.
A bride so fair, yet pensive sad,
While on this day all seemed glad;
Except this one, for she had fled,
Against her parents' wish to wed
The one who now stands by her side,
She gave up all to be his bride.
Home, parents, friends and comforts, too,
In the small village where she grew
To be the joy and pride of all
Who knew of her, both great and small.

She was a teacher, and the best
Her pupils loved her with the rest.
And John, dear, loving, honest boy,
To him she was his every joy.
He had loved her long and well,
More dear to him than tongue could tell.
Her every wish was to him law,
Nor could he in her see a flaw.
Poor boy, she liked him, but then,
He did not impress as some men.
Whom she had seen and heard about,
Though he was manly, true and stout
Of heart, and always ready, too,
To serve her just the best he knew.

She admired him, and all his ways,
But then, her eyes before his gaze
Could not meet his, for there she read
What at that time she wished unsaid.
Much too tender to cause him pain,
Or treat his love with cold disdain.
For another one held all her thought,
But this to hide from John she sought,
For he had come one summer day
And stole poor Mayme's heart away.
In him she fancied she had found
The hero which her dreams had crowned.
He was tall, dashing in his ways,
Spoke soft and low, not stinted praise;
And o'er her mind he had full sway —
John was forgotten from that day.
All took him for the favored swain
Until the city stranger came.
Stole her from him and all beside,
On Christmas day to be his bride.

The same old story, often told,
She'd taken the dross for the gold.
Time alone its tale would tell,
Reveal what others knew quite well;
That he was a most depraved knave,
To gambling and all vice the slave.
Her eyes opened, but when too late
To save herself from such a fate.
She was, alas! a gambler's wife,
For better or worse all her life.
The worse and not the better came,
Although she tried just the same

To win him from his wickedness,
His gambling and his drunkenness.
A sad awakening, indeed, was hers,
Days spent in wretchedness and tears.
And far along into the night,
Waiting, watching for the dread sight,
The hero of her dreams unerowned,
Her bright hopes dashed to the ground.
Many a Christmas come and go,
Bringing little joy and much woe.
First a baby girl, then a boy,
These constituted all her joy.

Long years have passed, years of pain,
And Christmas time has come again.
What changes in those years have come
To Mayme, daughter and son.
A widow now and in distress,
Her husband left her penniless.
Five years ago he passed away,
But she has managed till this day
To meet the wants of those she loved—
A heavy task, and one that proved
Too great a load for her frail form,
With sickness, grief and anguish worn.
The boy, a sturdy little lad,
To lend his help was ever glad.
His sister, with her loving care,
Her mother's anguish tried to share.
Sickness, sorrow had done their worst,
And Mayme thought her heart would burst,
As she no longer could provide
For those dearer than all beside.

To her they were her very life,
None more dear since she'd been a wife.

We'll leave them for a little space,
Another life in this tale to trace.
John, too, had left the vale and glen,
Where life to him had pleasant been,
For Mayme was his source of joy.
She had gone, and alas! poor boy,
What had been bliss to him before
Now brought sorrow to his door.
For every scene and every face
Reminded him of her. The place,
Full of delight when she was there,
Now held for him but deep despair.
Thus John also went his way
And it knew him not from that day.
With him, too, ten years have passed,
Flown, you may say, they've gone so fast.

Our scene now, not a village neat,
But city large, a busy street,
Where traffic of the densest kind
Thrust thoughts of rural scenes behind.
Where buildings, towering to the skies,
Attract attention by their size.
And men, employed in deadly strife,
For what? —money! Their God, their life.
We'll enter here, a monstrous pile —
A building of the latest style,
Where almost dwells a merchant prince.
Yes, dwells, for it is not long since

This merchant from the lowest round,
By centering all his will has found
The topmost limit of his fame—
Made for himself a mighty name.
From East to West he is well known,
In every village and small town.
Is he happy? Well may we ask!
Since he has achieved this great task.
A mighty power he has become;
But then, well, what about his home?
Has he any loving wife, whose smile
Welcomes to his home, and the while
With gentle hands pressed to his face
Tries to read his every thought, and trace
With anxious eyes that search him through
To see if there are troubles new,
That she might ease them with her care
And thus with the dear one to share
What she would bear full well as he;
Sharing with him the stormy sea
Of life, with all its joys and woes,
His friends are hers as are his foes.
Home, with loving wife, children, too,
Where love reigns supreme, known to few
Is this the incentive to his fame?
This the power behind his name?
No, this desire to lose all thought
Of just such scenes is what he sought.
Plunging into the whirl and strife
They served for him as child and wife.
No home, just where to lay his head
Business thoughts, to all others dead.

Happiness? Why, it long had flown
These many years he had not known.

We'll look now at this merchant prince—
We may have known him not long since.
Engrossed in thoughts and sitting there
Amidst a whirl of business care,
A man with brow of noble height,
Fitted by nature for the fight;
A man of men, who commands respect,
One of great power and intellect.
Years, indeed, have changed his face,
Still in the noble lines we trace
Our old friend John. What! Can it be?
Yes, dear reader, indeed 'tis he.
Years have brought him a noble mien,
With greatness and much worldly gain;
But in his face are lines of care,
For happiness is absent there.
Yes, it is John, still kind and true,
In all else the same John we knew.
Older, more thoughtful, still the same,
Spite of the greatness of his name.
See with what kindly smile he greets
That little boy, who from the streets
With papers to his desk has come,
Trying to help with the small sum
He may earn in this humble way
Those he loves; and from day to day
He's here, and John has seen him oft,
Greeting him in tones mild and soft.
"What is your name, my little lad?"
We hear John say. His eyes looked sad—

To see this one so young and fair,
With sparkling eyes and curly hair,
Neatly dressed and winning ways—
Mayhap he had seen better days.
"John, sir," he in answering said,
"And Ma is sick and Pa is dead."
"Why, that is my name, too, my boy,"
Said John, and to the other's joy
Gave him a sum, with which he fled
To his poor mother, now ill in bed.
It's Christmas eve, and with what joy
The mother greets her darling boy!

A great hotel is our next scene,
Which, decked in festive holly green,
And flashing lights, and busy throng—
A scene to be remembered long.
We see crowds hurrying to and fro,
Some are coming, while others go.
Making a picture full of life;
A whirl, a rush, an endless strife,
To one not used to city ways
Filling with wonder and amaze.
That little girl, with bashful air,
Selling flowers, she seems so fair.
Many buy, and they little know
What bring the blushes to her brow.
'Tis pleasure, yes and also pain,
To think that with this little gain
She may restore to that mother dear
Health, happiness and some good cheer.
Nurtured with most tender care,
Out of place was her presence there.

Why, here again is our friend John
Amidst this whirl and busy throng
The child attracts him by her grace
Something so winning in her face,
Or does he see some likeness there
Of one who once to him was dear?
He approaches her, asks her name
"Mayme, sir," quick the answer came
"Mayme," he said, to her surprise,
Looking into her deep dark eyes
Her mother's eyes, yes, they were hers
No thought of this to John occurs.
But the attraction was the same
As once again he heard her name.
"Why are you here?" he kindly said
"My Ma is sick and Pa is dead,"
She answered in the simplest way
John heard this once before today.
He asked. "Have you a brother John?"
He spoke so kind, the little one
Was drawn to him and answered, "Yes."
Did he not now the secret guess
That she was Mayme's child? The name,
Ever dear to him, loved the same.
For all his thoughts were of her still
Through all these years, nor thought he ill
That the one he loved had fled
From him, her own heart's choice to wed.
He had loved her with unselfish love,
His own heart crushed, still he strove
Her memory in his heart to shrine - -
To him she still was all divine.
He knew not where she'd gone, nor thought
The battle poor Mayme had fought.

The shame, the poverty, the disgrace
That she had found in that same place
Where he had made a name so great
It all seemed like the hand of fate
That these two to Mayme so dear
Should receive from him Christmas cheer
Their story so impressed his mind,
The names, too, and he thought he'd find
Just where they lived. He would call
On Christmas day and see them all.
Bought her flowers, her little store,
With more than she had seen before.
He then dismissed her to her home,
Telling the time that he would come.
The bells ring out! 'tis Christmas day,
And kind Santa Claus with his sleigh
Has called at all the homes he knew -
Dear reader, they were not a few.
Hearts were made glad and faces bright
That they'd been thought of in the night.
Stockings filled and tables groan,
Of many who dread want had known.

We'll visit Mayme in her home
Here want and poverty had come.
Old Santa Claus, too, had been here,
Bringing happiness and good cheer.
A large tree in the parlor stood,
Decked with things useful and good.
And Mayme's face, it shone with joy
As her daughter and darling boy
Repeat the story of the one
Who to them this great good had done.

Who could he be? "John" That his name.
She conned it o'er and o'er again
Could it be the kind John she knew
So many long years ago, and who
Loved her? Yes, now she knew quite well.
Alas! had she but let him tell
His love for her before he came,
That stranger, and whose very name,
Long since loathsome to her, and who
Had outraged every good she knew
Well, well, she thought, enough of this
'Twas not to be We do not miss
The joy and bliss that might be ours
Until they're gone, and all the powers
Cannot recall the past nor say
What may be in store for us today
Hark! is that a knock at the door?
The clock has struck the hour of four.
The hour he named the stranger "John!
Listen children, he's come! he's come!"
They hastened to the door, 'tis he
They both are glad his face to see
Each takes a hand of the kind friend,
Whose thoughtfulness deigned to send
Those rich gifts to that mother dear.
Their hearts were full, they brought him near
To their loved one and his own
The one who was his joy and crown.
"Mavme!" "John!" was all that was said.
As each the other's thoughts now read
she saw in his eyes the same deep love,
Now long dearer to her, far above

All things else which this world could hold.
And wondered why she'd been so cold.
He saw all this and read her thought-
His Mayme, indeed, is what he sought.
Such a Christmas, so blest with joy;
Their hearts were full without alloy.

Another Christmas and another bride.
And now 'tis John stands by her side.
Mayme, older, yet full of grace,
Happiness now lights up her face.
Joy is hers, for she now has found
In him all that her fancy crowned.

Ring joyous bells with merry chime,
This merry, merry Christmas time!

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